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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS  
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 8892

E.O. 11652 N/A  
TAGS PINT, PINS, SHUM, AR  
SUBJECT RADICAL PARTY MEMBERS ARRESTED IN CORDOBA

Exemption(s):  
Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full ~~DECLASSIFIED~~  
( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Declassify on \_\_\_\_\_ Reason \_\_\_\_\_

SUMMARY: A RADICAL PARTY BARBECUE IN CORDOBA, WHICH ENDED IN A MASS ARREST OF PARTICIPANTS DEMONSTRATES THE METHODS DEVELOPED BY THE ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES TO KEEP ALIVE DURING THE CURRENT PERIOD OF SUSPENSION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. SUCH ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN LOW KEY THUS FAR AND OLD TIME PARTY POLITICIANS REMAIN BASICALLY DEMORALIZED, ESSENTIALLY FOLLOWING AND NOT INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT PLANS AND TIMETABLES FOR A POLITICAL OPENING. WHAT COULD ACCELERATE THE PACE OF POLITICAL EVENTS (AS WELL AS COMPLICATING THE TRANSITION PROCESS), HOWEVER, IS JUNTA MEMBER ADMIRAL MASSERAS LATEST POLITICAL MOVES. END SUMMARY.

1. EIGHTY FOUR YOUNG RADICAL PARTY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS, INCLUDING FORMER NATIONAL DEPUTY CARLOS BECERRA, WERE ARRESTED AT UCRP OFFICES IN CORDOBA DURING A BARBECUE LAST WEEKEND. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS; THE DETAINEES WERE TAKEN IN ARMY TRUCKS TO CORDOBA POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND THEY WERE SCHEDULED TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE A JUDGE YESTERDAY (NOVEMBER 22).

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2. POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN BANNED SINCE THE

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MILITARY JUNTA TOOK POWER 20 MONTHS AGO, BUT IMPLEMENTATION IS SUBJECT TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ARMY CORPS COMMANDER OR OTHER MILITARY AUTHORITY IN EACH AREA AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES "PARTY ACTIVITY". LARGE BARBECUE FETES ARE OCCASIONALLY ORGANIZED TO CIRCUMVENT THE BAN AGAINST POLITICAL PARTY AND TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES AND FROM TIME TO TIME WE HAVE HEARD OF BIRTHDAY OR ANNIVERSARY PARTIES IN SUCH CITIES AS ROSARIO AND CORDOBA WHICH HAVE SERVED AS COVER FOR POLITICAL PARTY CRONIES TO GET TOGETHER AND TALK.. IN SOME CITIES, LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE ALLOWED SUCH HARMLESS ACTIVITY TO PASS WITHOUT OFFICIAL NOTICE. HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS RECENTLY DISSUADED PERONIST PARTY LEADERS FROM SCHEDULING A DINNER WHICH WAS INTENDED TO BRING DIPARATE ELEMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT TOGETHER AND TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE.

3. THE PRESENT CASE MAY MARK THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT TOOK POWER THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAVE BUSTED UP SUCH A GET TOGETHER WHILE IT WAS IN SESSION. WE HAVE SCANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PARITCULAR EVENT, BUT WHAT MAY HAVE MADE THE DIFFERENCE IN THIS CASE WAS ITS YOUTH ANGLE. ACCORDING TO ONE NEWS REPORT, THIS BARBECUE WAS INTENDED TO KICK OFF A POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT IN UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. UCRP SOURCES TELL US THAT THE PARTY YOUTH MOVEMENT IS STILL INTACT AND OCCASIONALLY ABLE TO CONDUCT BULL SESSIONS IN THE UNIVERSITIES. ALSO, UCRP YOUTH WING EVIDENTLY MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY YOUTH MOVEMENT OF WESTERN EUROPE. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE UCRP YOUTH WING CONSTITUTES A MAJOR UNDERPINNING OF THE RADICAL PARTY'S (RELATIVELY MODERATE) LEFT WING, AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES PROBABLY VIEW THE UCRP YOUTH WARILY AS POTENTIAL AGENTS OF SUBVERSION, WHICH MAY EXPLAIN THE RECENT INCIDENT IN CORDOBA.

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THE ARREST MAY ALSO BE RELATED TO A STATEMENT ISSUED TO THE PRESS BY UCRP CHIEF BALBIN (SEE PARAGRAPH 5 BELOW).

4. WHILE THERE THUS MAY BE SPECIAL ANGLE TO THE CORDOBA ARRESTS, POLITICAL PARTY BARBECUES AND OCCASIONAL ISSUANCE OF STATEMENTS HAVE NOW BECOME PART OF THE LANDSCAPE, ALTHOUGH THE PROMOTERS CAN NEVER BE QUITE SURE HOW THE GOVERNMENT WILL REACT UNTIL AFTER THE EVENT. FROM TIME TO TIME, PROMINENT POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS CIRCULATE TO GOVERNMENT LEADERS AND THE PRESS STATEMENTS CONTAINING THEIR ANALYSES OF

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THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION WHICH THEY BILL AS REPRESENTING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PRESIDENT VIDELAS CALL FOR A DIALOGUE. UNDER THE CURRENT RULES OF THE GAME THE AUTHORS SIGN THEIR NAMES AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT AS MEMBERS OF ANY GIVEN POLITICAL PARTY, ALTHOUGH IT IS WELL UNDERSTOOD BY ALL THAT SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS ARE INTENDED AS PARTY DOCUMENTS. EMBASSY RECENTLY FORWARDED COPIES (B.A. A-139) OF A TYPICAL DOCUMENT EMITTED BY ANTIVERTICALIST PERONISTS AT THE TIME OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S VISIT LAST AUGUST. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATION LAST WEEK PERSUADED PERONIST LEADERS TO DELAY THEIR RELEASE OF ANOTHER STATEMENT SO AS NOT TO COMPLICATE THE VISIT OF SECRETARY VANCE. RADICAL PARTY LEADERS ALSO DISTRIBUTED A DOCUMENT RECENTLY CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICY. AT TIMES, EXCERPTS OR SYNOPSSES OF SUCH DOCUMENTS ARE REPORTED IN THE PRESS. MANY TIMES THEY ARE NOT.

5. RICARDO BALBIN, PRESIDENT OF THE UCRP NATIONAL COMMITTEE, HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH A NEWSPAPER IN MENDOZA LAST WEEK IN WHICH HE ISSUED SOME OF THE MOST POINTED PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS MADE BY A CIVILIAN POLITICAL FIGURE SINCE MARCH 1976. BALBIN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE YOUTH OF THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THE TIME THEY ARE CALLED UPON TO VOTE. NOBODY WAS DEMANDING AN IMMEDIATE RETURN TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, SAID BALBIN, BUT THE NATION, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG, SHOULD BE CIVICALLY PREPARED FOR THE TIME THEY ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GUIDING THE NATION.

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6. THE OCCASIONAL BARBECUES AND STATEMENTS ARE INTENDED AS A REMINDER TO THE PARTY FAITHFUL AND GOVERNMENT THAT THE OLD POLITICAL PARTIES ARE NOT DEAD. THE POLITICAL LEADERS ALSO HOPE THEREBY TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PERHAPS EVEN TO UNDERSCORE THEIR AVAILABILITY FOR GOVERNMENT JOBS WHENEVER THE HOPED FOR POLITICAL OPENING COMMENCES. THE TONE OF SUCH POLITICAL STATEMENTS SO FAR HAS BEEN GENERALLY VERY LOW KEY, WITH BALBINS REMARKS PERHAPS BEING SOMEWHAT OF A DEPARTURE FROM THE NORM. THE PREVAILING MOOD AMONG THE PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS, AT LEAST IN BUENOS AIRES, REMAINS QUITE GLOOMY ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF NORMAL CIVILIAN POLITICS. THE BASIC POSTURE AMONG OLDTIME PARTY LEADERS IS STILL ONE OF CAUTION AND AVOIDING A CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE POLITICAL PROS ESSENTIALLY ARE STILL WAITING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND GIVE THEM

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THE SIGNAL WHEN AND WHAT KIND OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS PERMISSIBLE. IN THIS CONTEXT, A CLOSE WATCH MUST BE KEPT ON THE SIGNALS BEING EMITTED BY ADMIRAL MASSERA (SEE BUENOS AIRES 8752). IF MASSERAS POLITICAL MOVES BECOME MORE BLATANT, THEY COULD ENCOURAGE GREATER AUDACITY ON THE PART OF THE POLITICIANS.

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